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RAVINGS OF A BACKLANE HISTORIAN

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HISTORIAN

reflections on
smallpress

arthur cravan

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VISIT OF THE NAIAD & THE HAUGHTY MATRIARCH

Northrop Frye lived across the street, first wife ever so lovely, went with him to Australia on holiday where she died. Took him just a year before he found another. The university ended up with his house & effects—no relatives—most of it still sitting there as he left it, a guard from the university appearing maybe once a week to check the grounds. A very shy, quiet man, not unsociable, always showed up at the neighbourhood barbecues, never said much. A great Canadian.

MOMENT BY FAR NURTURING MORE SUSTAINING INSIGHTS THAN ANY HEADLONG MOMENTUM Call to W to decline her invite for Thanksgiving supper Monday, our exchange winding on with accelerating enthusiasm for a good half hour before her landlord showed up to bleed the rads. Like most critical denizens underground, she's concerned with the crucial issues of an enfranchised ethos, yet resists specifics, the need to concentrate first on the mechanics of art or economics before barging into view with ideal ultimatums. Terminological facility, in every discipline, the first hurdle to get past to exceed the repetitive rearrangement of mere tools, for a shot at shedding real light on the issues. Reading Pfeiffer it almost seems as though the standard among pros & profs is less to personally attempt to answer the questions raised from the dust of fieldwork, than to retail perceptions of the past conspired by consensus (& incidentally display that dazzling erudition...) in the industrial sinecure of another sanctioned book. As if they've surrendered the hope of ever truly understanding. Sad. Poetry today is largely hierophancy, each poem one adds to the tradition, by necessity, obliged to present some sort of corrective to lapsed essentials, yet poets no less, continue to applaud bald craft & (even more astonishing) brash sentiment, dismissing as trivial any distillate of critical opposition to the pre-

vailing indulgence, without an inkling of its fidelity. I think W's response (to the erosion of figures in the craft) that poetry has become less figurative, obscures the monotony of modern reliance on a very few fashionable figures in today's trickbag. The writers continue to scribble themselves away without even the courtesy of restraint to consider their duty to the ultimacy of expression, blathering on hypothetically about all the stuff they saw & all the things they ate oblivious to the responsibilities of intellect. A literary life surrenders the immediate revelry of sense & sensation for the ultimate revelation of essence, celebrating delay, the word a tool concealing the soundest purpose of breath, something anyone might recover who took the time to resound origin. You could let the page teem with circumstance (Patchen for instance, born a year before my father, addressed from the vantage of dutiful son), but unless the poem is prescriptive, you run the risk of adding the fatal brick to the load of letters which shifts tradition in our hold sufficiently to capsize the credibility of the craft for good. Libraries everywhere are already swollen with a history of excess inspiration that nobody absorbs, why add to the tumult? Too many voices competing for audition only interfere with the reception of insight, producing a static condition that obscures the very dynamism of the word they crowd. The poet today has to realize its place should never be there on the shelf beside those insights but rather inhabiting the word. The poem, the story, the novel survive merely as nostalgia, our duty overriding their authority to extend the resonance of the word ever further in the world. Writing (speaking (thinking is quintessentially (*ie.* exceeding the quadratic immediacy of elemental sensation—the *fifth* essence being the domain of the *sixth* sense) a digression from present breath [*the gift of life*], our past *resounded*, & as such, implores the careful re-examination of every cite before disturbing dreamlevels with the earnest scratch of inter-

pretation. Every syllable is a request for origin, the essence of all reflection a search for where we've been, a sounding up of self from the catacombs of memory. Language is all about the past, a lingual passion for tradition charged with the purpose of excavating presence, the only purpose people settle on that even approaches the comprehension of a sustaining imperative. We are archæologists (not *slobs* put here to indulge, acquire & escape) charged with digging ourselves up out of the labyrinthine sentence of the past. Submergence in the word condemns all of us to an existence underground, digs precluding a return to the world for those who won't dig the meaning of every sedimental (*ie.* irreducible) seme & scheme (sign/design). Surely Dewdney dished the dirt on the reduction of conspiracy (our legacy of *nesting* consensus) to phonemic granulation comprehensively enough for our generation to dispense with further need for *proof*. You hold yourself, ironically, more in the moment by digging yourself most deeply out of the past, antecedence a deeper measure of the prepossession of breath than the arousal of all our carnal sense.

A LETTER ON COACH HOUSE PRESS LETTERHEAD from sometime in 1974 attests to Victor Coleman's early attempt at jumpstarting a smallpress organization (probably derailed by his move to A SPACE & focus deflected to CANPAC), THE LITERARY PRESS GROUP no doubt partly a result of his enthusiasm. Ironical in the midst of present talk of unforming TSPG (john curry's invite to the first unofficial smallpress meet—on the tracks at Yonge & liquorstore, tomorrow night at 10—arriving today in the post). Seems to me the lesson of ROCHDALE got *lapsed* on history, the hopelessness of anarchic *organization* reducing all the emphasis to *community*—the hand you're dealt holding only greater or lesser promise of poker stoicism, the sole advance your game. They criticize Victor on the basis

of his acting out the physiology of immolation, getting stuck on contingent indignation instead of marvelling at the essential grace of anarchic motherhood implicit in his ability to explode (*mildly* mind you), then move on, the measure of workable community never more than momentary recourse to conformity. My sentiment that mere formality *couldn't* extend natural association among like-minds, wouldn't preclude my co-operation in the experiment of realizing a formal group dynamic. I submitted my suspicion at the reprise after last week's meet at COACH HOUSE, that should TSPG fold, the smallpress would not miss a beat, continuing more along old lines perhaps, MEET THE PRESSES still the ideal behind the present fairs. Seems to me the one perceptible difference as a result of all the fanfare & promo, is the increasing visibility at the fairs of the trade-oriented, *perfect-bound* presses, profile, as ever, attracting the most protuberant aspirants after prominence, the little guys blankly appended according to after-thought.. "*People*," as Jim Smith or Stuart Ross put it, "standing behind the books they produce," not the micro-industrial dotting of sharpening eyes roved round a room of delegated calculations. Anyone can pay someone else to bolt together a third person's deliberations, the ensuing credibility (not unlike third-party credit) more synthetic & predatory for the ulterior motives of product & market imported to vision. We, of course, continue to celebrate independence & self-production, the fair still not a bad venue to insinuate at least our alternative ideals where even the *thought* of purer motives may never have dawned before.

"*I dittin make the fries*" Kids take to slang as an almost natural dismissal of authority, the precepts & legalities of civility remote & impermeable to their comprehension of an overall scheme. As if the language of authority were private, some-

thing only initiates (read, *adults*) could appreciate, or even understand. The history of the oppression of the many by the few, I'm convinced, may also be traced to private language, a compact of codes & regulations set down by a literary elite back to Sumeria, to order community, occluding access by all but its administrators (eg. Latin in the church, legaleze, scientific terminology, etc). Evidence of opposition from the young to the constraints of ethical & state authority, taking the form of linguistic parody of the cryptic pontifications of the elect, began to appear in Europe about the time of the introduction of printing from movable type, in the half-dozen *Ballades en Jargon* written by François Villon in the argot of his idols, *Les Coquillards*, the *voleurs* of the highway who were the scourge of the French traveller of the mid-15th century. These vagabonds & malefactors (mostly soldiers discharged after the termination of the Hundred Years War, 1337–1453) had a 'king', statutes, & their own secret language, a spectacle the young Villon idealized from encounters with them in Paris in the taverns during his time at university. Not unlike the symbol of civil disobedience *bikers* assumed through the 50s & 60s, they excited the headstrong defiance of youth with impressions of fearless indifference to authority, imposing the frightful perplexity of their compelling example on at least a portion of the impressionable young rebels of the day. Villon likely typified the captivation of their youthful admirers, intrigued by their jargon sufficiently to try to learn it, an emulation that just might have spelled the introduction to the phenomenon of literary *bohemia* in its counter-diction sprung from counter-cultural disestablishment of oppressive private language. More than Dante's earlier defiance against the arcana of Ghibelline & pontiff, or Dafydd ap Gwillam's contemporary revolt against the strictures of a subject code (*Eisteddfod*) for poets, Villon's validation of slang signalled the beginning of a cultural revo-

lution accommodating the antipathy of youth for authority which challenged the fundamental mechanism of that authority for the first time, private language rejoined in parody (however intuitive) entrenching a counter-culture as incomprehensible & forbidding to the elders as their most esoteric codes of behaviour & ritual remained for the faithful. This parody of private language in literature introduced the phenomenon of ironic posture (*ie.* imposture) into community, enclaves of exemplary dissimulators arising in the conducive climate of skepticism, to evolve over 500 years, a notorious counter-culture of *bohemian* detachment, each successive enclave introducing its own unique brand of slang. The history of this progressive 'movement' of creative linguistic exception includes Edward de Vere's Savoy installment of EUPHUISTS (which occasioned publication of Lyly's antithetical prose fiction *Euphues*, 1578 & 1580, arguably the first English 'novel'); Petrus Borel's BOUZINGOS, notorious for the Hernani Rebellion of 1830, when Victor Hugo pointedly hired them as the claque for the premiere of his play *Hernani*, to disrupt convention among the authoritarian elite; Murger's *Bohème* of the 1840s embracing the WATER DRINKERS, Dr. Moreau's *Club des Hashishins* & the spores of Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*, which gave rise to *L'Esprit Décadent*—as Jules Laforgue described it—the café societies of the 1880s (including Jean Moréas's HYDROPATHES; Charles Cros's ZUTISTES; & the short-lived HIRSUTES) given to excessive languor & regular public readings; SYMBOLISM with its evocative liquidations of descriptive language (a culmination of the counter-cultural affinities to slang) & its focus the regular Tuesday night salon at Stéphane Mallarmé's flat in Paris, 1885–1894; Alfred Jarry's theoretical extrapolations of linguistic resistance, the exceptional PATAPHYSIQUE (that scandalous 'science' of imaginary solutions); Gelett Burgess & LES JEUNES, who gathered after the San Francisco earthquake of

1906, at the High Panjandrum, George Sterling's Carmel colony —Wallace Irwin's memorably madcap *The Love Sonnets of a Hoodlum* (1901, Paul Elder), just one of the many iconoclastic provocations of the exuberant Carmelites, extending the head-long display of counter-diction, to almost parodic pitch; *Enoch Soames* & the AESTHETES of The Mauve Decade in London, exemplified by the keening siren of Wilde's inimitable wit; co-founder with Emma Goldman & Edwin Bjorkman, of the anarchist periodical *Mother Earth* (the most strenuously political outgrowth of counter-diction in *Bohemia*), & "King of Greenwich Village," Sadakichi Hartmann's notoriously vituperative harangues; Fabian Lloyd's defiant Paris lectures & literary assault of complacency & convention from the pages of his periodical hoax, *Maintenant* (hawked truculently from a wheelbarrow out front of society events), which triggered the concussions of coherence detonated by the anti-art regimes of DADA & SURREALISM throughout the 10s & 20s; Pound's vernacular compressions of the lingo of the midwestern hick interjecting subversions of academic formality throughout his work; the expatriate enclave of the 20s, Fitzgerald & the *Flappers*, Jelly Roll & his JAZZ; the hipster revisions of the 30s & 40s, Cummings, Miller, Patchen, & Rexroth, with the heroic outcamp of conscientious objectors at Waldport, Oregon, during the war, which spawned the San Francisco poetry renaissance (Rexroth's pad hosting *their* weekly *soirée*), & the innovation of poetry read to jazz; the most famous of all *bohemian* movements, the BEATS, Burroughs, Neal Cassady, Ginsberg, & Kerouac popularizing hip talk to mass proportions; the *Hell's Angels* taking things back to menacing extremes, beyond the realm of *decency* & fashionable emulation, to a threatening threshold of coded defiance; Jean Shepherd & the *Night People* who convulsed Manhattan during the 50s with their conspiratorial diversions; the evanescent Guy Debord & the dissonant

anti-phenomenon of the first insistently underground encampment, the SITUATIONISTS (cf. Beckett's wartime *L'Étoile*); Lenny Bruce's radical *bits*; Kesey, Krassner, Leary, Owsley & the HIPPIES & the vernacular of altered consciousness; rock, *The Pistols* & punk, garage grunge, etc, every outgrowth of counter-culture rung round the unmistakable incomprehensibilities of its own private language, a display of pique & defiance too seductive for rebellious adolescents to resist. In otherwords, the smallpress with its defiance of commerce & convention, sustains its own characteristic opposition to disenfranchisement with a similar *bohemian* spirit of cultural counter-diction, erecting a *simulation* of exclusive society—largely oblivious to tradition—to illustrate the offensive ruction of private language to community: authorities of precedent & consensus momentarily displaced sufficiently to challenge the credibility of compact, cabal & imprimatur, hopefully, forever. The smallies use their language to *clarify* not obfuscate the potentialities of the word, abjuring the exploitation of their privilege of education for profit, advantage, or ambit, the language itself having no more power than the lexicons allow. They proceed under the assumption that even alienated bozos can comprehend most of human knowledge if someone takes the time to slow it down enough & put it into terms they understand, *people* reaping power through the *introduction* of insights & information. They portend a lateral inclusive community where the word is relegated to its proper place *beneath* the sanctity of life, where scholars defuse the sophistries of speech for the good of the group, everyone revealing his or her discoveries, in *contempt* for the oppressions of private language. The smallpress evolved & remains quintessentially an encampment of opposition to the control of ethos by an erudite elite—sophistry, that game the rhetoricians amused themselves with in classical times, an insipid ground for exploiting advantage

in any group dynamic—the integrity of common insight our only means to resonant community. Community not commodity, a distinction too many poorly-funded commercial presses *miss* assuming complicity in a smallie ethos, the undisclosed common thread of counter-diction in the smallpress having too long obscured the imperative of *resistance* for so many earnest opportunists seeking only recognition & profit.

MUCH POETRY TODAY is predictably derivative, exhibiting little more than the excitable rise to empyrean levels of rarefied vocabulary (or concept), a rank display of language speaking the speaker. Pound's summary expulsion from Wabash College in 1907 marked the inception of a new *exemplary* tradition in literature which he worked diligently the next 30 years to promote, the smallpress phenomenon (mostly via *little mags* at first) largely growing out of his spreading disillusionment with credibility sanctioned by degree & pedigree, a dissension highly significant both to modernism & Canadian literature. Acorn, Gilbert, Newlove, Nowlan, Purdy & Souster among the generation born before the war, emerged as the preceptors of this SCHOOL OF THE UNSCHOOLED in Canada, the first credible force of poetry raised on experience rather than theory. Their preponderance on the scene from about 1945 caused a definite disruption of the academic hegemony, which was only partially restored in 1957 with the publication of Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* & the award of the Governor-General's medal for poetry the same year to Jay Macpherson's *The Boatman*. Yet the proponents of a structurally-tutored accession rarely acknowledge the disruption, many of them apparently unaware that a slave revolt of those traditionally excluded from the pantheon, had risen in this country to wrest credibility away from the exclusive domain of the academies for the first time in history. *Tish* followed the academic trend,

Coleman, Nichol, UU, *et al*, counterpointing the mood with the antithetical *dropout* line of the initial COACH HOUSE dynamic (*ie.* anti-art all the way: irreverence for every tradition of cumulative, or emulative credibility; *parody*, their rejoinder). And with the cyclical resurgence of yet another academic hegemony late in the 70s & 80s—the high-octane sophistry of the social-linguists, the current retail of acquired doctrines & dogmas, & of a language that speaks increasingly to itself & others steeped in its rhetoric—we witness the further obliiviation of the significance of the SCHOOL OF THE UNSCHOOLED as a phenomenon in our cultural history, its proponents insinuating a *measure* of insights & facilities against which the work of the unschooled could never compare. They class the poetry of experience with ineptitude, by default, intent on establishing new *standards* for insight, a realm of *code* suspicious of the word of others. They marginalize by extension, much of the independence of the smallpress, ‘measure’ & ‘standard’ among experimental smallies, prime *foci* of dissent. Yet the underground press is out there today ploughing a much more fertile line than these dismissals appear to recognize, nowhere *nearly* as predictable as the terminologically predilected ‘departure’ of schooled emulations, curry & company furthering the notion of creativity as a measure of self not other, beyond the unnecessary impedimenta of referential conventions. The making of community is a sum of creative not recreative activities, *making* (making it..?), the thing. The smallie difference is the difference they make with their own *he/z*, mendicant exemplars plaintively exchanging breath for the merest credibility, language ever the province of people not poets, its *application*—not facility or fluency—the inspiring reflection. Anywhere you celebrate it (even swelling homage to fond antecedence)—perceived as a transitory flush of circumstance pulsing stance (& ultimately *repulsed*)—the word inevitably sounds up self. The

smallpress represents a movement of mere people privileged with access to information, free to question as much authority as they will, aware the means of heightened awareness rests expressly with the kinetic facility of articulation & convinced the only obligation of such privilege is to share access with every disenfranchised captive they encounter. The old notion of production-based culture is overloaded, community the only coherence any longer worth the exertion, the civilizing ferment of idea cultured on the restivity & intercourse of *interested* minds. Cultural sensibility in our midst should be far more significant than cultural effects. Certainly, if expression is a function of access to information, we're headed in this age of instant access, beyond saturation, 6 billion people ultimately all shitting their tome into the lime at once & no one free enough from the crush of anxiety as we herd back to dust, to receive them. More resonant than a miracle of breath blown in chat, leave behind the *undoing* of their rabid deceits of privilege (our speech winding out the new ruins of so much bald indulgence), *audition*, the signal proficiency of this medium age of prolific transmission. People prefer the totemic insulation of their acquired sanctities, our society in one light, a reprehensible shrine parade of proprietary digs worn in public to a high sheen of sanctimonious conceits, the smallie almost helplessly threatening acquisitive security with every exuberant tilt & teeter of his or her inquisitive wand. The wonder they sustain, more responsible than any expanse of uncharted terrain consumed with monuments in shrine arrest to the rectilinear acquittal of obligation (the worms indifferent to the conformities or deformities of the flesh as it settles into history's indelible humus).

SCAB OF DREAMS CLOSING OUT THE FIST OF BREATH
Of course, the purpose is an experiment in the complete

derangement of the senses, the reflex of language regularly retailing ambit in its rise to govern (Wallace Stevens, for example, resounding the uncritical tick of directives perhaps not actually *bellowed* along the corridors of Hartford Accident & Indemnity), the dictates of language insidiously distorted by the dictates of office, public persona ignited to sound by the pettiest peer pressure. What would it be like to abjure the forces of a civil tongue, release the sounds of attention motivated purely by word expanding unremarkably as every tropic breath fired into the cavity of wonder reports the vacant hopelessness of eclipse? The easy trigger of speech abjured for the desolations of the disaffiliated word.. *Don't add your voice, add your meditation.* Commonman circling seed, sticking his word (so it will grow) in the placenta of speech balloons.. thud of cold matrimonial lids shut like a tomb. *Typical asshole! unable to look himself in the eye.* The difference between Genya's "*I am a wantad!*" & the feeling you are a gonad. The ear utterly laced with eavesdrops.. *I can only tell you what I saw.* Not really, you can only tell me what you say.

ART HAPPENS IN YOUR HEAD NOT YOUR LIMBS "The artist is not heard but overheard. Poetry is a disinterested use of words; it does not address a reader directly." Frye implied that art is purely discrimination (a way of looking), having very little to do with expression, when he claimed the artist was merely engaged in a dialogue with antecedence, the precepts & examples (eg. language) of the past. Yet we continue to value cultural effects in Canada above cultural sensibility in our midst. Someone like Floris McLaren, who at 33 produced her only book, *Frozen Fire* (1937, Macmillan)—a surprisingly resilient volume of modern poems at a time in our history when there was only a small handful of modernist books—has come down to posterity primarily for her aid as amanuensis to

Alan Crawley, the editor of the first independent little magazine in Canada devoted to new verse forms, & social or political themes. Crawley was blind, so Floris did much of the work, managing publication, business & whatever other matters of survival required her watchful eye. The magazine, in fact, was her idea, something she proposed to Dorothy Livesay in the spring of 1941, which the two of them proceeded to enlist the help of Doris Ferne & Anne Marriott to realize, Alan Crawley brought in as editor as things progressed, because of his epic devotion to & knowledge of modern poetry. Her memoir of *Contemporary Verse*, as they called it, appeared in 1957 in *Tamarack Review* #3, five years after its demise, the only primary account of this pioneering venture in CanLit until the publication of Joan McCullagh's book, *Alan Crawley & Contemporary Verse* (1976, UBC). And yet Floris McLaren is largely omitted by editors & historians from the cultural record (like Margaret Avison after her, who was also a victim of exclusion because of a modest record of publication), included more often for her 'subordinate' role on the magazine than for her own work. Would anyone imagine Picasso any *less* an artist were he to lose his limbs, have his eardrums punctured, become blind & lose his voice (essentially play Johnny in Trumbo's antiwar paradigm *Johnny Got His Gun*), all means of expression rescinded by an apparently malign intervention of fate?! The outsider faction of the smallpress sustains a commitment to dismantle a culture erected on the specious notion of commodity rather than community, the strenuous display of industrial authority (particularly in light of the precept that the true man or woman of action is the man or woman of contemplation), long in need of being pulled down. The *social* model, which is hierarchical (graduation in social status, bureaucracy, or class, essentially a vertical, exclusive, schoolground imperative), doesn't nearly accommodate the dynamic of reflection as well as that of *com-*

munity (a lateral, inclusive model). As if only those aggressive enough to dominate the tongue *could* comprise the culture of a thoughtful constituency! The republican ethic of a natural aristocracy of talent & virtue advanced to replace the artificial privilege of primogeniture & patronage, far too manipulable in this exponential media age to defer to any longer. The atomic weight of a creative community is neither monopoly nor consensus, just as a resonant culture is never fairly measured by applause or other common denominator. The essence of a considerate culture is restraint, absence in poetry, silence in music, space in art—the boor, not the artist, the one who leaves everything in. Those who measure culture in terms of commodity, hearken to the commercial reductivism of a market imperative, that bottom-line rationale the butterers of unbridled prolificity fall for time & again like bottom feeders, reducing letter to number & volumes to volume. Credibility tailor-made for even the teeniest gulliver, a truth forged in the temper of lemming conformity, the lowest-grade candescence in the alphabet, *all faith* in numbers.

THE SACRAMENT OF MARAUDING the crowd at readings (journalists ostensibly collecting a record of the transient community convened for the event), in fact, exemplifies, more essentially, the need for cross-pollination of the various outcrops of creative sensibility assembled, each reading (in the sense that writing & reading as solitary activities, generate community that goes on more *in mind*), affording a comparatively rare opportunity to activate a corporeal counterpart to image nation. They mean to demonstrate by the apparent impertinence, the importance of opening up community by exposing themselves to the enclosed tenuities of transient propriety, hoping to initiate greater intercourse among those quickened by the word enough to congregate, while the aggregate

ecstasy of their palpable synergy is still coherent. It's not easy to move from table to table, breaching the stasis of temporary encampments, to interrupt as inoffensively—yet provocatively—as possible, each habitual fastness & remoteness, their spontaneous violations of the signal notion of privacy (thereby privilege & private property), more often ingratiated with emphatic inclination to self-sacrifice (or, *every party needs an asshole*). It's preposterous to conceive community as some accumulation of closed conditions, particularly when confronted by a roomfull of skeptical initiates in the implications of open mind & image nation, the need (albeit *gently* & with a consummate sense of empathy & love) for disruption & encouragement to shared delight, more a duty or obligation, it seems, that everyone of us presuming to inhabit the caul of poet owes, by our very facility for opening, to the incitement & sustension of resonant group dynamic. Those used to the unexpected thunder of the word (*ie.* poets), are better equipped for it than anyone, roving the scene to engage, however fleetingly, a most exotic constituency. An easy thing when you imagine the genius lurking in the lightning everyone flashes periodically with the briefest glance electrifying suspicions of another Kafka or Van Gogh, not merely needing space, but equally craving *welcome*. Not so delightful when you encounter the self-consumed, emanating their gristle of hegemony, convened usually in one corner together (amid a culture of laurels they find *restful* apparently), oblivious to the current imperative of *activating* ethos: each reprise of community requiring the animated reinvention of terms as nexus over which the word brings its vessels together. As if to them the moment were not momentous enough to *move* the flesh & its affections toward a broadened intercourse, nothing but attitudes shifted in the passive grope of the inert *voyeur* (not so different from their books really, which for the most part abjure

any but the remotest involvement in their making). *What is it with these people?! the word & its insights convoke infection, a need to quake with others amid inspiration, spreading the contagion as thoroughly as possible in the brief opportunities allotted (recalling the forno in Creeley's registration, "It's lovely to do something with your bare hands & mind, in the instant it is possible...").* You don't sit on your erudition, you *act* elder, never less than a servant to the muse, the kids & the less secure initiates in your presence, deserving the charity & ministrations of a more consummate audition. Vision ain't something you bank, it's something we *share*. 'Show us your facility,' the sort of overture kids are entitled to assail elders with, their knowledge of how to be more in the language, in essence, a legacy entrusted by the past, for them to *relay* to posterity. The race don't stop for *no one* to sit on *no* fatuous laurel! Insight brings with it a responsibility to spread the word at every opportunity, the poet by definition a teacher obliged to move everyone within reach to the broadest amplitudes of literary resonance, not sit pat on that knowledge like fatcat capitalists cultivating private estates of credibility. Nor does mere affinity with a more communal notion of intellect excuse us from the need to demonstrate our service to posterity at every opening, a display of elder exuberance for the privilege of conveying the tradition momentarily through history, by example alone, capable of converting more initiates to image nation, I contend, than the most brilliant image or poem: *ie.* Pound's insistence on a shift in imperatives from the classic didactic stance of the academy, to the fluid *exemplary* animations of the modern role of poet. Their example ensconced in the corner, almost *enshrined*, beneath the respectable glass of public scrutiny, as if in effigy pinned to the extravagant felt of a museum mount. Pound put the artist on display as the work of art, more credibly than the dandy or the symbolist before him, by moving

through the ranks of studious academics & dilettantes with the fury of a plague, infecting everyone in his path with the spectacle of flesh afflicted with intellect. These movements have unfortunately been too little recorded, so that great folds of sheep have eaten away the scruff of precepts fringed through his fields of interest, during the last half-century or so, without so much as an inkling of the enzyme driving the *green* fuse out of the ground in which his investigations took their root (like the faulty aim of most academic charades today, *just grazing him! thankfully*, not doing serious damage..).

HALF THE FUN One of the most significant smallie distinctions is the pleasure of paying for the privilege of sharing your hard work with others, smallpress publishers regularly given to mailing off their books to those as passionate as they are for amateur (read, *independent*) effects, an entire community disenfranchised beyond the point of resounding anything more than interest (*ie.* their own reciprocations of handmade art). Control of the press among the ulterior interests of state, church & big biz these past 500 years, essentially protracting a lock on lines of distribution, the smallie alternative exemplifying forthright initiative for retiring the capital from the equation & absorbing the costs of contact with a select constituency of reciprocating initiates, trading on their vision of a participatory dynamic directing creative expression where it has the greatest currency. A thankless investment of one's spirit & exertions perhaps, but exponentially more responsible than the obsequious pander of anemic *dissembling* expressly played out at audience. Smallies know enough not to depend insight on attendance to their word, especially in an age when practically everyone—at least in the west—has sufficient means of communication in hand to consider themselves poets, the lemming prattle of endless hordes of humanity throughout the ages,

amounting to little more from the ultimate end of the glass, than the dull roar of another species thundering toward the brink of self-consumed extinction. The bilious distillates of insight, as Frye intimated, only ever transient refractions of the radiant inventory of breath directed inward to the guidance & edification of its medium [*cf.* McLuhan], never communicating other than its dialogue with what history & precedence we hold audible. Have the good grace to grow in public.

ACORN & POUND were not anti-American, they merely recognized the imminent failure of capital democracy, an elliptical model that had passed the point of usefulness to the majority, long before. As fundamentalists returning to the basic principles & ideals of government, they were obliged to attack America as the bastion of capital conspiracy, in no way implying the slightest censure of the culture or the people, just their rapidly accelerating system of distribution of goods & services concentrating wealth offensively in a smaller show of hands with each turn of the trick. No matter how *natural* centralized power might feel, our ideals of more equitable community transcend the limited vision & productivity of the feudal system, the mafia, the church, the bank, the dictator, the king or any other despotic oligarchy minding the welfare of the dispossessed. It is clear that when a system begins to deteriorate & compromise the principles on which it was founded, it needs revision. Capital democracy has proven itself, after catalyzing community for a good 200 years (*heavy on the cattle..*), to be deleterious to more people than it supports. We've regressed back to feudal conditions, with the bankers—Del Mar's nefarious monopolists or *Billoneurs*, the original 215 financiers, moneychangers, privateers, filibusters & bullies who comprised the renewed East India Company of 1662—increasingly controlling every exertion, the pyramid of capital convulsing

all but the most essential trades & services in the crush to displace goods with their most unproductive *interest*. From its outset, the smallpress presaged an alternative to the ethos of the plantation, cultivating the advantage of doing the actual gruntwork in place of the corporate irresponsibility of delegation. Funny how much more resonant community is when its constituents put their shoulder behind that interest, a hardcore conspiracy of charitable auditors rabidly convened in the ideal of a *participatory* dynamic (the extra bodies marshalled out systematically by the line-boss, usually contributing little more than *baffle* to the acoustic thrall). And yet, so thoroughly are ‘Americans’ whitened in the wash of plant mentality, that mere tenor of æsthetic or spiritual prescience is not enough to win even crusts of sustaining approval from them, the experiments of genius remaining largely invisible to the capital rabble unless displayed in commodified forms—book, poem, song, *etc*; writing alone, say, or discovering your own song, never enough, it seems, to win wide respect or support. The innovators, the experimenters blazing trail, the visionaries advancing culture beyond the darkness of common sense, all *outsiders* in a capital dynamic forced to submerge in the more accommodating catacomb of the smallpress to nourish essential genius. It’s clear the smallpress belongs underground, no advantages whatever to sharing effects & revelations with a largely indifferent & unappreciative mass, the alternative community quintessentially a participatory domain: join in or tune out.

THE FALL OF FUN BY JAMES ATLAS closes on a tangent that is focal to the smallie æsthetic, the notion of winging it in a notorious age of calculation, rehearsal & last exits covered: “[Stafford] & her contemporaries messed up their lives & died—literally—for their sins. But they risked pain in pursuit of a more ambiguous pleasure: the pleasure of living fully. They

took seriously the admonition of Lambert Strether to Little Bilham in Henry James's *The Ambassadors*: 'Live all you can; it's a mistake not to.' For them, this kind of pleasure—or to put it in a different way, an openness to experience, a willingness to wing it—stood high as a goal, however unattainable." Atlas (nor Jean Stafford & co) doesn't, I think, mean to address anything more than a style, or attitude of expression (in keeping with the strict obsession with fashion & the *manifestations* of intellect that *The New Yorker* sensibility engenders), but for smallies, the essence of winging it is suffused with the quintessential cultivation of the contemplative process, neither manner nor technique, but rather a reflex the artist learns to rely upon as the only meaningful resource in the transmutation of world to word. That kinæsthetic refinement—utterly inviolable ideologically, to even the most extreme supercession, like *Alzheimer's*, & thereby *reliable*—on which the most coherent community resounds, effecting cultural sensibility far more nurturing of ethos than the most exotic display of transient captive effects. Their matter *language*, like the expression 'the meat of the matter'. Where expression for many artists is confined to performance of rehearsed effects, it remains for smallies the tireless re-examination of pattern & progression, the uninhibited disclosure of going over old ground as an expression of advancing on new territory, ringing the community with recognitions, to unforeseen resonance. A reliance on reflex, not memory. The democratic co-efficient of a truly creative—not recreational—ethos; what kept Kerouac outside the literary establishment (& the lime of fame); what fired Dubuffet in *LeDouanier's* example of equivalence in a culture of equivocal sophistries. Nor can it be any more effectively valorized, falling back on reflex, quintessentially a retreat from the obsession for climax (the notion that we advance on feeling, to *ecstatic* transcendence—that antiquated imperative of

inconsiderate progression: good measured by one's feelings—which the skeptical tradition deemed so irresponsible). Apart from the expressions of wilful anti-climax—DADA! seen as *cravan* fulfillment, the figurative or technological obsession with orgasm—most of the art produced by alternative sensibilities restored (from the cumbersome baggage of technique) to reflex, comes off with far less sensation, but I think far more sense, than the commodified counterpart means to deliver. Performers are much better at entertaining than meditators, but they seem far less at home with their instrument in public when not recalling the things they know, like some poets when not reciting their poems. Art can only properly be an expression of the artist's familiarity with the matters of art: line, letter, tone & hue (*or* space, absence, silence & light), mere measures of belonging in a rigged equation where we long endlessly for identity to relieve us of the roles we inherit. Like furniture you let someone else pick (the speciousness of 'home' decorated by interior decorators..), the appropriations of effect & technique from other men's mouths (even the forms, *poem* or *song*) confine you to a frame in which the picture lacks all but the remotest reflection of personal development. Where are *you*? Discrimination & artifact alike furnishing totemic context for where we *do*, in fact (for the most part privately) reside. You end up right here when you abandon the repertoire, at home in the reflex securing you most reliably to more than just familiar conditions.

SCREAMS FROM THE BALCONY Cooney ironically touching on, but ultimately unable to get his thread through the needle, *a community of letters*, solitary scribblers *effecting* all the community they can sustain, *in mind*, the civilizing ferment of language all there really is for anyone to trans-act. He fumbles with "a social retard reaching out as best he can," (by letter),

yearning after community, without bothering to notice you're only as close as your word to others despite the distance (stance *before* instance—community essentially a thing in mind before your thing in mine). His lament over the significance of the epistolary form in our time (eg. FAX, phone, e-mail) resounds a most deluded false-alarm, the flatulent, rigorous vise of establishment odds every outside, underfoot, contrary tout ever risked resounding conscience, assholes stuck with the skinniest thermometer dicks in the stable, ostensibly dispassionate behind their read, riding the remains of inspiration with the tock of metronomes, their steady drip of privilege assuming every right to pass unction over every word no matter how it got fucked out of their 'private preserve' of language.

THERE'S A GREAT DIFFERENCE in the camp of the outsiders between left out & staying out. Weird how no one seems inclined to comment on the regressive complexity of this so-called 'advance' of text-to-WEB justification for the old guard's bid to dominate alternative publishing again in such flagrant reprise of their legendary heyday ideals of competitive ingenuity & fixed ethos, like we hadn't dispensed with vertiginous conceits of centralized culture in the interim, or like they added anything crucial to the exchange as it stands. Even more curious to note how few people recognize the dominant imperative of opportunism in what is essentially a power-play, the elders looking to generate *business* for their industries & at the same time obliterate the memory of their immediate predecessors, in the most monopolistic display of 'charity' & 'support' for the writing community they could summon. Not art, in the end (*yet again!*), that gets served, but media, the heroic sacrifice & insights of disenfranchised artists marooned beyond means in their solitude of ideals & integrity (the garret & grotto of intellect), deflected to the benefit & preserve of mere meddlers

& their technology. Not too much difference between private language as the fulcrum of centralized culture & their *emphasis* on the possession of machinery on which the word gets coined, in my book. In fact, this preposterous criteria of hardware & modem on which their vision of a new ethos is predicated, veritably *shriek* its obscenity of privilege, the enlightenment afforded by those who go to great lengths to control & impose new machinery of expression, removed considerably from the liberating light of literature idealized by the skeptical revolution. Their self-serving gestures of support, in fact, oppose the very resonance of accessible means & meaning on which the scrabblings of letter & lens turn to widest advantage, as the crucial nexus of an inclusive participatory community, promoting instead, an ethos confined to the privileged elite who own or have access to computers & modems & share the codes of the new contracted language developed to run them; a rank perpetuation of the artificial monopoly on insight & credibility implicit in Liebling's notorious aspersion, 'the power of the press belongs to those who own one.' They seem unaware that cultural responsibility implies a recognition of the need to open mind & language by clarifying sophistry interminably, not encourage the complication of insight with increasingly complex elaboration or involuted qualification. They would have us return to a culture of rhetorical excess. How is it that so few others find it even modestly suspect that a working knowledge of technological language passes today far more credibly as a cultural *essential*, than the vision & ideals of æsthetic (especially literary) accountability? No question in my mind whatsoever that the enlightenment of the word is being subsumed by their example to the tinkered dazzle of facilities for manufacturing its glow, the clamour & festivity surrounding the new medium veritably drowning out the echoes of insight on which it has come to prey. Homage to facility pre-

sented in the heroic guise of homage to the word. No rocket science required to realize they mean to overshadow the democracy of the independent press that rose up during the past quarter century, the fresh expediency of the copier having advanced alternative cultural community more dramatically in that period than ever before in history (*exponentially* further than its predecessor, mimeo). Five hundred years of the press in the hands of ulterior interests (state, church & big biz) & in one fell swoop, the word is rightfully reverted to the keep & ultimate discrimination of those who nurture it most carefully through the moment, only to be expropriated in short order by the new mandarins of an expeditious renovation: culture no longer measured in terms of better insights, but better pencils. And the new standards of lavish design achievable, even further displacing the essential concerns of the word into the margins of contemporary publishing. Artaud's incendiary dismissals of masterpiece belatedly now, more than ever in the 60s & 70s, igniting wonder for the need & meaning of such seductive excesses. Unfortunate, moreover, given the virulence & cohesion of the smallpress community the last 15 years, the bookfairs, the incest, the opposition to convention & establishment more vehement than anything occasioned during the so-called heyday of the smallpress back in the 60s & early 70s, the utter subterranean independence of the resilient young salvage artists, suddenly, it seems, a covetable credibility *worth* pulling out the stops to topple (certainly availing credibility by association to judge from the number of elder smallies the current hegemony seduced *back* to the scene). The old guard with their new technology just don't get it, their genius for *directing* production & *directing* culture have become invalid to a new generation ablaze with the infinitely more responsible measure of making as much as you can of the limited means at hand (whatever they might be: trying *your* hand at everything), on your own, the

salvage of culture & credibility retrieved from the unassuming mist of fundamental insignificance, bartering emissions far more resonant with integrity than the most crafted ideal. You'd think they'd *realize* the era of the trophy publication is defunct (cf. e-mail). Expression as a measure of self-reliance has become much more engaging than even the most *elaborate* confection executed by slaves, just compare jwcurry's 24-pager *Land is Down* (1989, Curvd H&Z: 75 copies), with any of its commercial counterparts, & witness the execution-style assault of relatively static effects achieved with contrived texts & visuals, & a surfeit of materials, machinery, employees, & money, compared with curry's control & arrangement of the modest means at his disposal aimed so clairvoyantly beyond the expectations & limits of convention & expression. The conventional retorts seem *drilled* point blank, straight into the anticipations of a sophisticated *patsy*, in an effort to blow away the competition (increasingly fancy covers on poetry books *for crying out loud*, all hustling some—what?—*best-seller market..?!*); whereas with curry's book you feel yourself under attack, yet the guy never brings you down, say, to common denominators—like maybe feeling hit—his rein of elements firing *you* instead with concussive wonder, at the uncommon openness of his book & his line. *Not* design. A significant renovation of the line, the page, the book as our means to transmuting life to letter; curry's achievement so dynamic, so evolving, so original you will never be silenced by its assault, never feel yourself pinned to its comprehension the way the commercial collage of progressive formulas & deliberations—fashion statements, really, albeit indisputably advanced & refined in their affinities—means to floor you with effects. His work remains the marvel for the unorthodox vision & independence conveyed, solving ever more tenuously the enigma of book as vehicle for the vastness of reflection, nothing static in it from conception to effect,

by far the more moving, more responsible gesture of thoughtful or considerate violation.

STRANGE WRITERS ARE STILL BEING REJECTED from consideration for grants & awards (or for publication & inclusion in anthologies), for being self-published, after the revolution of the past quarter century so *thoroughly* revised the implications of vanity publishing. It has become a mark of *responsibility* to publish your own work, to usher one's say from inspiration to expression as far into the world as you care to bring it. Opening the language wide & predicating the ethos on participation, not only contributed significantly to the reduction of æsthetic obsession on masterwork, it also obliterated the need for sanctions of imprimatur & consensus, culture no longer measured in hierarchical standards. No longer is it useful to pass the creative expression of a literary community through the censorious orifice of appointed arbiters of taste & excellence, our shift to process in art relieving artists (& community) of the compulsion for perfection. What commercial or sanctioned imprints in Canada represent *today* lies more along a scale of popularity than propriety, the books you see on the shelves of the bookstores, chosen not so much for their excellence as for their salability (or, as has been customary for too long, to acquit the publisher of either professional or *personal* obligations..). The smallpress publishers (*ie.* the independent, underground smallies), for the most part, have issued their own books for close to 20 years now, to the extent that it has become not only a commonplace, but also a mark of distinction, to stand behind your word. And yet, the establishment continues to shake their artificial standards at some of the most inspiring visionaries in our culture, impeding them from due recognition & reward the way the trustees of the public good kept the geniuses of the past in the shadows until

a new age of enlightenment grew up from *their* vision. In Canadian literary history this *stupid* measure of twenty-year-olds on standards of their grandfathers, excluded some of the most respected pioneers of modernism from the usual validations, A.J.M. Smith's 1943 *Book of Canadian Poetry* notorious for the indignation it provoked among the omitted *First Statement* crowd. Their redress of exclusion, the now legendary 1947 anthology *Other Canadians*, might be held up by contemporary proponents of a standardized excellence, as evidence of the *benefits* of the regulation line, successful & even influential works *provoked* ostensibly, by the challenge to meet higher standards (just as they insist reasonable limits are *required* to winnow the chaff of cultural production..); yet however they try to justify it, the practice of pre-selecting works for consideration of recognition & reward, remains, as everybody knows, in force to relieve jurors on grant & award committees, of the tedium of wading through increasing mountains of 'product' published each year. One can't help but wonder, however, just how hopeless the conventional editor or juror is at distinguishing significant cultural contributions on the basis of the work alone, or whether writing today attracts accolade & support in some cases, for meeting the qualifications of the body politic without even remotely approaching the æsthetic insights of grace or resonance. The movement of the 80s was indomitable in its subversion of the stigma of vanity in self-publishing, exemplifying an enhancement of responsibility by *middling* as well as conjuring their word. They came to see that the process of reflection wasn't in fact complete until you set your insights at large, half the fun of making art, it turned out, being the delight in making it public. Why give that pleasure away? And what ensued remains one of the great marvels of book production, an incredible plethora of the most imaginative publications in our history, *obscured*, however, from the record by

petty regulations. The artists felt that if they weren't worthy of official consideration as artists, why bother depositing their works in Ottawa (a copy or two of their handmade gems representing a disproportionate excise on their efforts—compared with the two copies demanded of subsidized presses—resulting in an immeasurable lacuna in the public record & perception of one of the most exciting revolutions in our history). Culture for too many people today, sadly, remains the same herd denominator steeped in sanctified, centralized media, that it's been for eons, a policy, not a pleasure, under the rigid rule of thumb. A policy that opens, *never pick up strangers unless they look just like you.*

JONES KILLED HIMSELF LAST NIGHT I call D.M. Owen with the sad news, then decide to phone David McFadden, the only other person I know who might care to know (ironically, both of them, like Jones, from Hamilton): all 3 of us Davids, devastated by the tragedy of his beauty eclipsed. McFadden just 3 or 4 days ago having discovered a photo in a box taken at Jones's wedding in the basement at the old Sneaky Dee's, Jonesie looking so happy he thought, beaming, compelled him to stick it up next to his computer for inspiration, perfectly mirroring my rediscovery only yesterday, of the snap taken at the same event of Am waiting her turn under Jones's father's pot belly, in line for KFC, a warm nostalgia bathing through me for several minutes as I sat here reliving the innocence. My horror at having sent him just 2 weeks ago, a care package with a playfully caustic note, slightly disgruntled by Jonesie slighting me at a booksale a year or so back, & by his rejection of my TORONTO ARTS COUNCIL grant application last year. Fucking literary *politics!* Precisely what bears remembering any time one feels the bile build toward living, fearful, vulnerable others who also happen to write. McFadden recalling Jones's attitude

these last few years as unaccountably resentful toward him, yet it seems Jones was in fact not comfortable in his own skin. If only he could've held on long enough for the jam of his various hats to break out in the resplendent flight of personal, private resonance; if only I knew things had gotten this desperate & could've told him "*Wait! you do come through!*" Ah, Jones! You were a sweet, careful, lovely boy desperately craving *identity*, blown to bits by every wayward wind, dancing on tables to their overtures for Bukowski's drunken bear, spraying them with nasal notions when you thought only eggheads were capable of appreciating your *obsession*, cocking the beret & marching endlessly in the struggle to unionize our word. Another corner, a few more turns, dear lovely man, & I know it would've been there waiting for you, *your* reflection suddenly late at night in some dark store window—the perfect fit *you* were—relieving every tedious pose that keeps us from the simple pleasure of the text, your future ripe with the consolation of unremarkable delights like writing in a journal, trading letters, delving deeper in the history of the word. So sad! So tragic you didn't wait long enough to take your turn. So horribly horribly sad. Like Gil Orlovitz; I think his years of work on *Obsessions* set Jones up for irredeemable eclipse, our characteristic *nothing* fed back at him, ultimately more than he could endure. Yet this smallpress alternative—community transmuted to image nation—portends such *saving* grace.. Not a community you search so desperately for belonging; that is the flaw of the social moth inflamed with the need for company (W resorts to company before making, presumably as anodyne to solitude, & it seems Jones couldn't shake the seductions of that lime any better). The public solitude of letters turns out to be far more than a preferred substitute for herd proclivities, it is our only hope: parallel lives lived on the line out of range, wound together in mind.

HARD TO PROP IN A CORNER AMONG THEM recognizing hardly anyone chooses to *dizzy* themselves with Rimbaud's intentional disorder of the senses, instead preferring the secure position of keeping *busy* at the poem, however dull the outrage or insight might be. I am nothing, Rimbaud's shit! yet I gasp this sentence of days dizzier in the moment, whirled with exhilaration deep into a subterranean hush. The lemming charade all write their book & live their life overhead, oblivious even to the notion of a difference, the critical responsibility to *vitality* or *origin* in each relation of word to world, escaping their languid glare, for the neon obsession of seeing their hallowed name on a spine next to their sanctified models, a recreational divestment gratuitous as every pool of Pavlov's insipid drool. They hunch under squints of suspicion agitated by what seem to be uncalled for eccentricities, mere students submerged in study presuming in mind an authority they prefer to reserve for more demonstrative displays (say, degree or pedigree). No allowance for a muscular alternative, where every expression embodies gesture (gonad, mantic wand, or fist flung high, emphatically pounding out a miracle of breath from deep within its cage of bone), the only song you hold (where learning dissipates in the tensility of the vessel) compelling you to the sirens of insight & outspokenness. What ensues beyond memory? (*Alzheimer's*), identity predicated on the kinæsthetic insinuation of art (*ie.* what it makes of muscle), leading us further into grace than any index of antecedent referents, a fluency or equilibrium capable of extemporizing any wind instantly into a philharmonic emergency of flight that ravel every filament of miserable prescription toward a most can-descent escape from the dismal tunnel of stencilled vision.

WRITING IS NOT TELLING Current TSPG fairs promote the burgeoning of an earnest elite, contradictory to everything

the underground or outside press represents: an inconsiderate lot styling themselves *cream* without concern for what their hierarchical model of culture raises, say, in the pond.. The sort who earnestly believe they'll discover the next James Joyce, oblivious it seems, to the fatal excess of masterwork at large (Artaud's finger pointing from the dust atop endless shelves of classics in libraries, wagging the appropriate reproach). The culture of excellence, particularly in this age of enhanced access to information, weights the ethos dangerously *against* exploration, the exercise of sophistry & erudition (like listening to Glenn Gould play *arpeggios*), more than ever, entrenching *standards* of something its proponents deem a profession, when the revolution of the amateur (*amo* resounding passion) these last 15 years, ought to have demolished the conceit for good. As if the social realist poets of the 30s never broke the monopoly on credibility held for eons in the academy. Culture became exponentially decentralized with the advent of the copier (power of the press no longer confined only to those who own one), the revised access to media ushering in fresh attitudes toward art (Frye, Cage, *et al*, long contending art is discrimination, not expression): *there are no artists*, only people sifting terms, the language there for all to explore. Art rather a measure of integrity than excellence. And still the interminable reduction of culture to common denominators, art taken down (dictatorially) in the headlock of formality & craft, where the new ruins of origin should suffice to revive the wonder of sound beginnings in every sift.

bpNICHOL LANE The induction occurs appropriately on the most critical of all pagan holy daze—more significant than MayDay itself—*Walpurgisnacht* the night *beltane* fires roared across Europe, frantic farmer threats keened to mantic pitch, a sound assault of grOnk & scree swollen to crescendo din to

terrify the evil spirits set to jeopardize the morrow's planting. A perfect day to honour the scion of soiled convention & sound revolt, a pagan holy day commemorating a softie for saints. Emerson, Thoreau & Hawthorne are buried in a cemetery named Sleepy Hollow, Kenneth Grahame's *Toadie* driving his infernal motorcar across the TV backwhen through another beep *Frog Variation*, joyriding the dreamy hollow behind ROCHDALE into a most animating future. ROCHDALE & COACH HOUSE both focal in our time to the ecology of a truly zen soundscape, bpNichol Lane—a b(1)plane parenthesizing *the bicameral dialectical bipolar eternally relative & indeterminate modern industrial swing-shift of perpetually uncertain identity*—as fertile to the “archæology of morning” as any fabulous boneyard in Boston. Come to think of it, that lane could be thought of as the first *Information SuperHigh Way*, an I connecting the 2 serifs of ROCHDALE & COACH HOUSE in their conspiracy of revolutionary revelations with a *typical* wink, Stan & bp earlier than any other rank deserter from the *status quo* infecting silicon speculations in the local literary spell.

THE OUTSIDER From the small end of the beerglass, the issue of notating breach appears as nothing less than a depiction of more razed trees, the outsider living in the fringe of society, outside the conventions of literary community, outside commerce, outside credibility, outside the notion of property, outside the party, outside class, outside the frame, the lines, the scheme, beyond contempt, perpetually out of bounds, outside time, out in space, beyond the gravity of tock, outside the law, the jurisdiction, the norms, outside history, outside the prison, out of the running, outside proper channels, out of place, outside meaning, outside identity, outside certitude, outside rectitude, outside the game, (outside lane), beyond belief, outside looking in, “outside in the distance...”, in the rain, in the traffic forever *playing*, ever out of tune.

THE LANGUAGE SUPERCHARGED TO PURE EMOTIVE BLAST I rejoined with my theory of emotions—the toxic distraction of hormones impelling the suspension of articulate expression—illustrating the essence of emotive expression with the legendary lysergic commentary, “Wow!” (not especially *descriptive...*), & pointing to the flush of adrenalin in the racer—or the flush of testosterone in the penis—to illustrate hormonal thickening of membrana (*contraction of aperture*), the clarity of expression rolled off a thickening tongue *fogging* the say in a haze of monosyllables. The harmonic decay of articulation clinically regressing from compound to simple sentences; from polysyllabics to monosyllabics; & finally, to terminal interpolation of consonants in words, a conclusive deportation from *say* back out (it almost seems marooned) to *see*. Eventually you learn to let the poison dissipate before clamouring back to the word, all tock a matter of transmuting analogue to log [read, *logic*] or line, the commissures even at their leanest seldom taut enough—like wire—to transmit symphonic refinements of the slightest contemplation into sounds that swell. Synchronic perception/conception transformed to diachronic expression, or the vertical instant spread laterally through history. You want to rely on the secretions of neurotransmitters to stimulate the word, *not* the glandular gush of emotional syrup, a thickness immediately evident in the absent resonance of the dulled morpheme & the slurry say.

FURTHER OUT I thought maybe guys like David who’d managed to experience the sobriety of perfect-binding at least once in their festivity of speech, couldn’t help but feel the hoar of critical obscurity that much more deeply, subliminally primed in the formality to even keener presumptions of significance. Maybe our saving grace truly remains *outside*, the lowlife press immune with the antigens of exile: strive for invisibility & you end up feeling perpetually accomplished..

HANK Bukowski, I think, found most contemporary poetry irresponsibly selective, the recording of experience through the tightest aperture in the game—the asshole—a puckered take of details abnormally partial & unreal. What would it look like shot from a wider, more impartial lens, his take not merely folding in the roaches clenched beneath the sink fucking, the shit & the death, for effect or sensation, but because an accurate reckoning of his condition could not avoid it. The sewer beneath him was running red. The poet, after wading through the spilled entrails of women & children in Cambodia & Nicaragua, could never return with an innocuous, ethereal pastoral or a sylvan lyric, the secretions of chronic innocence unbearably ignorant & impertinent to the revulsion inflamed on universal indifference. A poem was the death of a bloated child in the Somali dust, the poet returned with accounts from the frontiers of cognition, to the town auditorium, deserving critical attention, not the abominable petulance of privilege preferring entertainment. Bukowski's audience invariably leapt into the shit & depravity after him, obsessed with that drunken caricature of the dancing bear he never (judging from the obits: *Barfly Buk Buried*) had a hope of escaping. He made sense to the savage, opening a kind of audience to poetry, yet found himself terminally confronted with herd indifference, hardly any of them capable of distinguishing a seismograph from an etch-a-sketch. He painted the broadest canvases full of the most insignificant details, capturing the carnal comedy with all its tragic flaws. His whores, victims of poverty & neglect, conveying a responsible sense of their world because they had no choice but to take it all in, like him. Whether suffering improves art or not, most *victims* unquestionably suffer the world with heightened sensitivity, Bukowski's sensibility steeped in the context of disenfranchisement, his observations linking him with Rimbaud, Artaud & Céline to the most

endurable line of scribblers dedicated to recording the history submerged beneath the risen fat of oppression. He kept to the language the guy next to him at the track could follow, 6, 10 beers off into the dark tapping his way through the tortuous passages of the temples of *onan*, lurching the disjunct image, stumbling enjambment, scrabbling the distillates of clarity from the poisons & bile of an ungrateful humanity like only a few other savage martyrs of the word back to the cave & the cry. He wrote for the right reasons, out of the perpetual solitude of alienation from a world that offers no place for anyone but the opportunist, his insights & critical theories more carefully reflected than most suspect. The chronic unwillingness to *spout* analysis was merely his social grace for preserving the moisture of the moment, his natural revulsion for the dehiscence of convention making him highly sensitive to the slightest aridity.

RAGE, I REALIZED because the very stasis & paralysis of death so fatally so finally resonates the passive compromise of everything a counter-culture rises in opposition to, too near a coup to be suffered in silence or with propriety. The rationale behind that postering reflex to Jonesie's eclipse now evident, death driving one not only to distraction but also to action, the dynamic of *making*, in fact, the most essential nexus underground, our most emphatic exception to this sacred miracle of breath taken lightly enough to be squandered, say, in front of the boob, or on a stationary bike at Super Fitness. My response to Michael who was crying, obviously devastated, was to reaffirm Bukowski's own position that nothing in this life is so sacred we can't put it into words—especially death—a simple glandular (*ie.* emotional) relationship to matter hardly much life at all. This guy should've died 40 years ago, I say celebrate the fullness of his every stolen breath since, rejoice with full

glasses over the endless inspiration he left, every one of us close enough to the edge to be next. He earned the rancor! Death that stops the entire tribe, gathering us together over the memory of others to toast the spark so deeply mired in their reflection. I say let his death, let death move us to action, drive us inspired through the streets *making*: noise, community, memories. Nothing dies where that spark of making strikes out in other hands.

KIDS are the most sensitive receptors in the community, but they lack the knowledge (both access to information & the patience to accumulate it) to afford society the benefits of their observation (*cf.* the emperor transparency & the empirical fix of skepticism). Why doesn't some rich guy—or one of the comparably few rich women out there—use a little vision & marshall this resource, recruiting groups of kids to act as a sounding board for ideas, or think(quick)tank for solutions, for scientists, governments, corporations, *etc.* In effect, their essential indifference to not knowing anything—essential because it helps them survive the insecurity of adolescence & their utter absence of authority in the world at large—equips them with the greatest advantage of all, an *open* mind. The notorious commonplace that you can be buried by the terms of your study to the extent that the language begins to speak you, mysteriously never seems to deflect the financiers from hiring their *experts*. These kids, given the right coaching—fed the particulars in a way that they could understand & integrate them—might just solve a few stumpers, yet society continues to repress their ejaculations & deport them from the heart out into the cynical hold of the gutter, teeming with its lemming tide of disillusioned oldfarts whose ultimate contribution to the perpetuation of the species to date has been confined to the meanest of excretions. Lordknows, our 'progress' to this

point in human history, has all been the direct result of insights & ideas advanced by those somebody called kid..

"Any vision of a bygone age so golden that everything since appears as a comedown tends inevitably & effectively to discourage innovation & experiment, offbeat persons & offbeat thinking." John Pfeiffer resounding the essence of modernist imperatives, old uncle Ez craftily propounding a more liberal preserve of tradition, with room for innovation & the offbeat, with that enigmatic contingency "make it new"; inspired to the point of giddy exhibitionism with the mischief of its apparent iconoclasm, because secure with the vision of promise the complex hybrid of his model beheld. Those who emulate modernist effects without an appreciation of this focal enigma, miss the point.

LEAVE LANGUAGE LIVE Those who approach the craft as a sacred facility, bent on acquiring graduating degrees of technical proficiency, without ever having entertained the alternative notion of reinventing poetry (returning to origin), have a hard time understanding the irreverent subversion of regulation for its sake in the poem, rarely consider where anti-art in fact leads. Every utterance & scrawl should resound the imperatives of literature's inspired beginnings, the intention behind the word preserved in the spirit of joyful/mournful compulsion to respond to carnal conditions with *song*! Otherwise why bother! Funny, sustaining a scrabble mentality toward this miracle of breath, the tepid proprieties of precedence & rectilinear ostentation.. You learn as much as you can of the craft in order to *free* the word from such constraints! You miss the point opting for awkward constructions to accommodate metre or recall antecedents, while ignoring what's there, the poem with all its proud baggage lending itself most readily to

ridicule (a propitious place, as far as I'm concerned, to indulge the obsession with irony that remains the dominant convulsion of late modernism). Where craft & its proprieties subordinate the word—as in the medieval Welsh conflict between the minstrel truants & the moribund court bards mired in their etiquette & elite convention—the say inevitably revolts, recoiling on essentials that militate for the resonance of heart in mind, mere joy of language at long last righting the masses in a pool of common reflections. We definitely don't need any more parochialism or *exclusive* literary dynamics to make the word a better place to live.

THE OUTSIDER No reward for the outsider to look forward to from the cultural midden of our contemporary ethos. The diff rests in memory like barely perceptible strata in an excavation where decayed ramparts leave the merest discolouration in the soil, shadows of the most epic devotion played from our memory on the intractable indifference of posterity with only the slightest hope of diversion. Yet this is essentially the obligation assumed by poets codifying as much of the moment as possible in the most hermetic terms, W, in one sense, consumed with conveying his likenesses perversely, to his colleagues in the field rather than direct a shadow dance into the future that mildly interested voyeurs might take the time to decode. Commemoration *for* the moment, a tedious indulgence at best.

ARTISTS stampeding toward the void frantic to get out that next work, the lemming fury of an industrialized impulse.

OVERFLOW YOUR INSULARITY Michael Dean's reading turned the room around, his word as good as its performance as he portrayed in gestures the lengths language goes to demonstrate affection for those who take the time to love it

well. A party sat at the table directly in front of the podium, their well-heeled, wit-worn grace, all primed politely in the effortless postures of intellectual privilege & consensus, proving a daunting impediment to Barlow once he took his place (in a chair, as usual) up on the stage, their expectations of entertainment—or at least comprehensibility—frustrated from the outset by John's headlong, uninflected (& apparently unresolved) pronouncements, to the extent of interposing their flagrant fidget & almost adolescent embarrassment uncontrollably between the rest of us at the back of the room & the reader before them. They became for me like the alps, their efforts to contain the incredulity John's work aroused, distracting a good part of my attention from the remote performance beyond. As a result, John's rare contribution to literary community, a line so open it invites comprehensive residency—room in his work for everyone to lounge comfortably in & conspire, a generous projection without the usual dictates & suspensions of disbelief demanded by more pontifical scribes—got lost in the rigid crags of their unaccommodated constituency. Upright pillars of an indulgent entrenchment of *yuppie* complacency, enjoying their rectitude by poking benign fun at *misfits*, invoking the predictable figures of a tired consensual linguistic in the face of one who plaintively exhorts retirement to the focal resonance of an independent line: where we end up, imagining others' terms, a far more responsibly democratic accommodation. They simply refused to imagine what such 'mutter' might invite, aspiring in the final analysis, to nothing beyond the familiar reflection in their glass, the fulcrum of insight portending nothing more for them than the tedious monotone of excellence on which the intellectual tradition has bloated the past two thousand & change years (admittedly, to memorable effect). Like one's politics wouldn't extend to such terms as our impulse to expression unfurled! They all

of course, promptly escaped as soon as John was finished, leaving those of us without lives to the delightful absorption of each other's uncertainties, at last.

VAIN DREAM TO MAINSTREAM UNBUTTONED Late night cruise through *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of Canada*, issue 33/1, the Paul Boulton paper on RED DEER COLLEGE PRESS (pp51-66), so tragically illustrating the misplaced expectation & understanding of the smallpress in Canada, especially among librarians. Reviews of Carl Spadoni's *A Bibliography of McClelland & Stewart Imprints, 1909-1985* by Lorna Knight (pp74-7), & Edward Chielens's *American Literary Magazines: The Twentieth Century* by David McKnight (pp86-8), further illustrating the formality of institutionalized precepts against which progressive art in Canada continues to founder for credibility & respect. The currys of this world don't stand a chance as long as smug, self-serving bureaucrats dictate terms of cultural emancipation & responsibility in the contemporary flux, their essays & reviews rarely advancing anything more than a restatement or collation of what we already knew, the fervid industry of their febrile publish-or-perish mentality, predicated ingenuously on rehash, the weakest token in the intellectual censer. Their recognition of experiment is confined entirely to history, relegating live ones like John Curry to a fate of perpetual penury & obscurity until all the necessary regulations of *rigor mortis* have been met. They don't even notice how reprehensible their machinations appear to the outsider, sustaining almost unconsciously the proprieties of an incestuously hermetic, exclusive dynamic of the *old-boy* variety, showering each other with accolades in print, & referrals & appointments in the profession, for the *selfless* service each contributes to the support of a progressive intellectual ethos, without it seems even an inkling that their maundering rehash

speaks only to the sheltered vanities of other clinically-removed, largely dispassionate tourist sensibilities among the institutional elect. Their fatuous disfigurement of bibliographic, typographic & historical refinements, it seems, results from, & largely goes unchecked because of the general collective indifference toward esoteric, independent or progressive literature—especially poetry—a specious authority they assume essentially by default. Not a clue about what's happening beyond the confines of the museum or the necropolis. Assuming a dependent relation to progress, they never suspect the far more engaging proposition of proceeding independently through studies & facilities, lacking the terms of reference with which to begin even to identify the unique accomplishments achieved beyond prescriptive dependence on the stock crutches of manual & institute, by defiant originals like curry, who look on life passionately with only wonder (*ie.* the grace of god) & their appetite for ingenuity, rising to the challenges of ignorance & initiative *exuberantly*. The notion of growth by doing (where the true proponent of action is the person of contemplation), resourcefulness replacing rehearsals of robotic mimesis (where simian precocity, never growth, is the measure), approaches the only aspect of progress that manages to hold up. We may start out obsessed with the prevailing currency of the moment, feverishly accreting, say, affectations of the so-called *avant-garde* (eg. proprioception, or prescience), gradually relinquishing *effect* for fluency in expansive modes of articulation—not so much an advocacy of precepts as flexibility amid the figures of esoteric elaboration. *Fluency* the measure, a personal investigation of construct by examining how the thing seems made: the making of intelligent observation & facility glaringly exposed as we gradually decline the transparencies. In a sense, precisely what is argued for in phenomenology, an entire shift in seeing, the acknowledgement that that look is always in,

never out. Yet how pervasively the dependent stylists & dogmatic advocates dominate the field, the far more complex & much less polished conceptions of the independent student of origin, obliterated by the flood of ambitious emulations perfected on recognizable models by clones conveying, by their obsessive grasp at excellence, nothing more than the tedious (& so much less engaging to be almost embarrassingly *simple*) insistency for recognition & credibility. An outer-directed stance *jockeyed* at attention. Their romantic conceits of expression precluding mere recognition of mantic insight, or registrations predicated on something other than æsthetic commonplaces like beauty & bounty.

THE ANIMUS OF THE WORD inciting public ministration to the smug countenance, say, of remote voyeurs—& incidentally driving all meaning from the text, the writing holding nothing more determined than the keys to the dialectic—leaves the ordinant feeling exceptionally marsupial in a world of parochial advocates furthering a most selective (& covert), discordance of private agendas. Not so much a lack of convictions as the play of language presenting a far more resonant nexus for community than the sober pontifications of a proprietary certitude. So many tourists of the smallpress *miss* this crucial point, the weightlessness of involvement in the lateral dynamic of the word relieving the heavy authority of pronouncement that anchors those rooted in the world to their repressive ascent after social standing. The only advocacy is the word itself, never our allegiances, the play of language skirting vast tracts of possibility beyond the plodding propriety of local insight. Motility that asserts new order predicated on a charity of audition; that resounds the appropriate vectors of antithesis to every assertion, rejoining all advancement of insight & concept with the complement it invokes. A sort of devil's advocacy

primed to apperceive the model (or suitable creative polarities) invoked, & resound the extremities, a conjugation of locus & fastness as much as the conjuring of playground in which to contain momentarily, our delirium for words. No false leads, rather the compulsion to engage whatever terms prevail beyond the paralyzing gravity of freighted means, beyond the sightless sea of frigid self-absorption. The need for nexus, commonly steeped in banter, turned to the wrack of wayward instigations, empowering community to crystal currency. Motility most otherworldly & undeliberated, no cradle of language unreceptive enough to hang sound up on long.

IT WAS NECESSARY YET AGAIN to remind people of the distinction between presses of conscience & industrial commodifiers, the unfunded smallies forced to compete at the TSPG fair with an increasing array of aggressive imprints which enjoy representation in bookstores, reviews, ads & libraries the alternative smallies never get, effectively marginalizing the very presses that started the fair precisely as an alternative to *this* lack of exposure. As more commercial smallies attend the fair, an increasing proportion of the pool of disposable income coming in through the door is absorbed in purchases of books the customers have either read about before or seen on the shelf 6 or 8 times in various bookstores around town, that factor of recognition, particularly in a crowded market, certainly not an insignificant consideration, whether of titles, authors or even format. The outsider presses can't compete with those that operate on grants, nor are they in the market to, having established the fair initially as an alternative to remaining out in the cold, not as a forum for commercial presses, however small, to engulf them further in the shadow of capital. Sales figures bear out the public impulse for playing it safe at the fairs, more browsers using the opportunity to buy slicker, professionally

produced books over the decidedly more *amateur* handjobs, when faced with the choice. The cry for greater numbers at the fair—reduction of a letters reality to numbers, especially repugnant to those committed to a more *creative* coefficient of cultural community—ignores the evident limits of interest & audience most smallpress productions confront, making the same tedious mistake the inevitable cortege of departed small-ies made straggling the past, distribution in the alternative press, far different from moving product the booktrade *recognizes*, through proper channels. The audience for independent, esoteric & experimental art has always been limited, no amount of determination or fanfare likely to extend the bounds very significantly. One of the more effective traditions of distribution among the underground presses back to the beginning of the mimeo revolution in the late 40s, has been by maillist, publishers not only assuming the costs of production, but also postage, to direct the work to those in the alternative community at large, to whom the writing speaks loudest. The distinction being, these mediators of culture summoned their resources to make an *investment* in the art & the ethos they passionately believed in, rather than exploit the word like those given to calculating their return in ulterior terms of capital. If you count your time, you lose less money producing a small edition by yourself & targeting recipients, than betting to win, & dancing the commercial twostep for 8 months or a year hoping to recover your costs. Given UNESCO standards for a book (48 pages, 500 copies), it also saves more trees. Fact is, the publisher's place in the equation, is simply to bring the writer & the reader to intercourse, a modest enough service for which he or she deserves a reasonable return. Yet commercial publishers & their employees today (down to the lowliest floor-sweeper) enjoy greater security than either the vast majority of writers they publish, or the preponderance of readers on whom

the whole game depends, taking home a regular paycheque, owning homes & cars, & generally avoiding the perpetual diet of terror on which the craft is nurtured. The responsible small-press publisher is devoted to reducing both the exploitation of the writer, & the power & profit of the cultural mediators in our midst, their patterned integrities resounding the alternative of community in place of that despicable, rapacious pimping-order with the fattest head on top.

BREATH SPILLED OVER INTO ITS POSTERITY OF LETTERS
The letters are, but the numbers tell the story, disclosure & accountability necessary in the literary community, to reveal conditions—*ie.* pizza mentality: how many mouths you have in mind, a revelation that ought to qualify the excesses of the hunger artist oblivious to community. However a proposition understandably offensive to those artists who've managed to escape the inertia of insignificance for a place in the pantheon of industrialized popularity, to the extent that they sour before contributing either support or info to the cause of redressing artist marginalization in the current equation. Not a lot of class unfortunately, left for the losers [*ie.* *Los* leaders...] who continue to create some of the neatest things in the language.

HARDLY IMPROMPTU the work comes off the page at a glance badly burnished, an effete, strained detachment of words flaking eloquent intentions without leaving the slightest impression of Zukofsky's play of intelligence, W, as ever, articulating ideal suburban precepts through an endless play of idle associations with nothing to show but seams. God! the transparency of 'art' arrogating distinction through theme! There is a river under the line, a palpable stream of consciousness thundering utterance out to sea beyond the petty arrangements of composition & grammar, its torrent of transparent

gravity cutting precise, unmistakable trail on its own terms, from the glistening bed of speech, & even the trickle of W's emulations can't mute the earnest deliberation of his resourceful maunder, resonance occluding greater association, both of language & concept, than it registers. A rumble (no roar) beneath this book, oppressive for its tedium of derivations & militations of *status quo*, not an inkling in it anywhere of its abrogation of the responsibility this instant-info age demands. Sadly deficient as a commentary of its context—the “vast conspiracy of mechanical consciousness,” as Ginsberg indicts it, emphatically not excluding the clockwork rewind of the regulation howl. Where is the *fury*, the rage of insignificance & ineffectuality?! The *contempt* for decorum & decoration?! The resentment *toward*, not only a celebration of, language?! The denouncement of rhetoric in a world of unimaginable inequality?! The admission of impotence in the shadow of the word's incalculable tradition?! The disgust emulations like this ought to punctuate out of the invisibility they impose?! The unmannerly rejection of the viral mutations of others' tongues violating the integrity of virulent impression?! The intemperate oath of profane authority?! The condemnation of the incessant *rain* of letters?! Doesn't he *see*, they spit their word out against the currents of their age, as much to rid us of the eternal *thesean* obstinacy—the virus of language puked up as cathartically as possible—as coat us in the bile of their emulsifying invective! W blithely confecting *niceties* in a remote recollection of autonomous detachment where the privilege of private language was indulgently turned away from the world in recreations of the *status quo*, the most revolting abuse of revolutionary means as far as I'm concerned, in the entire lexicon of lingual responsibility. Who does he serve with these shambling inanities? Not the innocent or the disenfranchised, not the word, not his craft: *Onan!* the drab of every drudge swelled with the retiring pro-

bity of simple self-importance. The emperor's clothes are all wrong!

PRIVATE PROSPERITY Most people persist in the belief that culture as a dynamic bubbled up from the ranks, despite the evidence that cult congregates around specific tenets & ideas radiated from on high. All language is invention. The language least comprehensible to the masses remains to this day, the language of number, an organizing principle extending back in the history of ordered community, beyond the mnemonic of rhyme & metre—or as it originated, alliteration—as the most vital coefficient of civility yet devised. Long before bankers won the right to control the creation of scrip, number ordered people to the calculation of concerted elitist interests. Marriage, until recently, was usually arranged in terms of property, in the interest of preserving power—& thereby, theoretically, the commonwealth—a purely economic institution funded on wage & wager, social cohesion wound with the ties of disparate fortune to weave as many retainers as possible, into the fabric of society. Every power elite, back to the Caucasus, knew enough to control lines of distribution, the means of greater prosperity, the mountain pass, the roads, the ports (& later the shipping lanes & rail-lines, not to mention information media) consolidating power in the hands of those controlling the points of access, the bottleneck in the funnel. No coincidence the AFL-CIO (funded by bankers initially, as were the great populist revolutions—the numbers industry preying predictably on mass prosperity) maintains such militant control over the roads, periodically revealing connections to so-called organized crime, power dynamics in essence, remaining beyond the influence of every ethic but profit. The legendary mainstay of legitimate mafia business to this day is the cement company, the modern equivalent of stone (power traditionally in the

hands of those who controlled it). Think of the Masonic tradition with its faintest origins back in the remotest mists of an age when survival (& later, prosperity & civility) depended on the production of stone tools. Think of the magic of metallurgy, the smithing of bronze, then iron. Think of the *ziggurat*, the temple, the pyramid, the monolith. And think of the numbers today directed by those controlling oil, uranium & plutonium (or that remoter stone, drugs..).

KRYSST OF THE UNDERDOG The word, like history, enlivened at best briefly, by attention (preferably to detail), a veritable Babel of stratified insights lost in plain view in the stacks, mere moments after excavation. As much as address it, we must embody posterity, the careful exertions of many thousands of years of scribes & epigraphers worthy of every revision their insights might ignite. Think in numbers, speak in letters, no *surfer* linguistic (think, *New Wave*) exploring the figures & currents of history responsibly with mere extemporization, an ingestive chauvinism predicated on frivolous revision, contemptuous of every mantic pronouncement. The mimic refuses to admit epiphanic enactment of his word, no krysst of the underdog emitting a kind of semaphore frantic to direct ever greater attention, however cathartic, even peripherally entertained in his centripetal parody of credibility, that meat motility driven beyond image & impression to the hard calculus of sound assailing meaning. What if there was something to history beyond antiquity & effects..? Something present.

A REEK OF ICONOCLASM THICK AS FOG RISEN IN PLACE OF CREDENTIAL Cachet, sanction & imprimatur (or bald salability) mediating all credibility in such vertical models of closed society, you remain completely invisible—even to other so-called artists—without the telltale stamps of their consens-

ual approbation. A sick thing when the reputed paradigms of culture perpetuate the endemic context of such exclusively volume-based dynamics. As if it's not clear enough to everyone except the industrialists, the capital equation has exceeded its resource, concentrating too much credit in too few hands to generate sustaining returns, the industrialized west virtually staggered by the burdens of debt & social obligations to the brink of dissolution. So why concentrate cultural credibility in the hands (or mouths) of those few who insist on measuring insight with comparable bottom-line reduction (the *line* both in visual art & in literature, it should be obvious enough by now, purely incidental)? Productivity, say, to the Avolokitesvara, was *one* pure thought, resulting from a thousand years of uninterrupted meditation in a cave high up in the Himalayas: my *beef* being, they make no allowance for cultural sensibility in their midst—or for the more radical concept that cultural sensibility is in fact merely *human* sensibility—without the expansive proof of (often the most unbearably tedious) productivity, elitism of the lowest order [insight reduced to *shit*, our most prolific expression]. Art is about restraint; yet where do the *considerate* men or women of contemplation fit into their ethos, little or no substance to show for their insight, the mouth by far less reliable as an aperture of accountability, as we know too well, than either eye or ear. Sad to reduce discrimination to the showboat denominator of performance (perhaps fashioned on the scientific mania for demonstration that has convulsed this century).

EMPHASIS ON LOSER The promise of youth & all one's dreams steeped in adolescent piss & vinegar, ultimately dissipated to the forlorn passage of a craft tailing its wake of unavoidable compromises, the 5-o'clock dreamer pretty much numb down there at the end of the line, head in hand, immured

in dull reflection. Perhaps, in fact, the very nature of poetry is *losing*, breath, this miracle of life, transmuted finally to mere squiggles on a page, an expiration of insight. Disrupt appearances & formalities! engage the amazing creatures surrounding you, in passionate intercourse before the breath runs out! Swell yourself with memories of others that they may ring on in mind after they sweep out of this world, never permitting death's irrevocable eclipse to dull the resonance of their unique moment in time, every utterance you make bartering the echo of a veritable chorus of expired miracles, against the implacable solitude of the word. The incomprehensible *implacability* of humanity gone on without each & every subtracted soul! The selfish arrogance of the healthy organism ignoring what it does not behold.

WHAT ELSE AFTER ALL is history but the impersonation of one's predecessors through the passionate embodiment of their litter (*eg.* letters), the essence of any sort of resonant recovery of antecedent culture emphatically speculative & expressly creative.

PINHEAD VIEW OF THE WORD Competitive excellence in art, apparently encompassed in the hierarchical model of mentation (pathic, iconic, & noetic thought), reduces insight to a most productive & marketable expression, the popular plant today having abandoned it seems, even the notion of great ideas. I think of W, whose work represents, for me, mere staging of manners—thespian instincts highly refined—moving increasingly weighted co-efficients (Pound, John A., Wallace Simpson & her man..) calculatedly around in a tableau amid the furniture of an indulgent suburban reflex. He plays out the neurotic insecurities & compulsions of the acquisitive middle class—never exploring or elaborating the motives & reflections of con-

templative man (even Pound for him, an enigma of *fashion*), matters beyond common impulse—psychoanalyzing without ever apperceiving that distinctions of language alone refine psychology. Nothing quintessentially inquisitive in this prevailing facility at all, just an album of strained effects snapped from the comfort & security of a first-class seat in the observation car. And in a world where culture is measured by applause, you end up feeding only those trading in the common perceptions, the greatest risk-takers prising up the most essential insights—D.M. Fraser by comparison—not even incurring a fraction of the respect & social recognition of the common *rag* pedlar.

KARL SIEGLER'S DIATRIBE on the state of publishing in Canada in *Blood & Aphorisms* (September 96), reminds me that writing is a headspace & too many writers invade an official cosmopolitan established air full of their fervid dreams & aspirations, leaving the far more risky & unrewarding task of articulating the personal, independent headspace to those beneath the illusions of career, ambit & yardstick facility. It is expressly because we are dealing with tradition that we are justified in relinquishing all claim to form, every essay forth made in the celebrated plumage of form, quintessentially effecting homage. We owe it to the civility of literary culture to move our word *beyond* every limit of tradition, as much as we are bound by tradition to recognize & celebrate the formal paradigms of antiquity.

A KINAESTHETIC RESPONSE to the word, the language thundering to cognition (*stochaia*) through the fog of bone & preconception, sense in analogue sought slowly in the dark with only a shudder to guide us to the resonance of intelligent amplitude. In a sense, the affinity that separates the post-

modernist writers from their modernist predecessors; a shift of cognitive reliance from left- to right-brain function, more than just proceeding on æsthetics of melos, logos, phanos & mythos. W for instance producing a poetic which emulates the extemporizing ejaculations of jazzy expression, the lists unfortunately, after too long, leaden with the perspiration of formula. For inspiration to survive, one needs to fly blind without the rustic baggage of prescription or anticipation, kinæsthetically embodying a language only wind fully blows.

CLOCHARD IDEALS The smallpress abjures the unexamined insistence on approaching publishing from the worn industrial or commodified model with its implicit cachet of sanction & endorsement. Smallies exemplify active participation in literary community as essential to the subversion of hierarchical notions of sanctioned culture, activists ablaze with the illuminations of a renovated ethos tooled on independence & autonomy, conspirators fully cognizant of the specious resonance of imprint & endorsement, scribblers more in need of a community in which such notions are not anathema, than of a place in the present hierarchy reserved by consensus & influence. Their productions celebrate & resound the inspiration of each other's publications, serving renewed notice to the mercenaries out there contorted by obscene impostures of ambition & self-consumption, that aspirations of a more accommodating community have begun to displace aspirations of omniscience among an increasing claue of visionary insurgents to whom the word resounds breath not applause.

ART IN A COSTUME of technique & effect—like make-up: cf. the made-up mind—presents a portrait of the craven artist who bares her soul but hides her identity, in essence a com-

mentary on art that claims insights & conceals every glimmer of antecedence in its pompous advancement on credibility. Those in the language who pretend *they* have the credibility, *they* have the authority, selling us their tired notions of elitist culture, never owning up to the fact that we *all* come into this world without a shred of speech, that all is stolen (art mere salvage), the so-called credibility & authority they presume, in fact, ours for the sharing, already ringing up their deficits of insight & expression from tradition long before they ever acceded to the spell of our commonwealth of sense & sound. The smallie alternative never means to install aggrandizing displays of moribund omniscience, aimed as it is, from the wings (*ie.* outside the plotted lime of *Literature*), at subverting the deliberation & calculation of coming up with something BIG, the littleman knotting such notions of grandiloquence with insolent abruptions of the pettiest difference. A line dismissing the need to replace fraudulent establishment yearning for masterwork with anything *better*, the tedious cycle of better goods dismantled along with the encyclopedic arrogance of pending masters fertilized on the oasis of ideal (elitist know-it-all snobs who actually *prefer* it that way..), with the utmost contempt for all consequence & *status quo*. A celebration of irreverence (*ie.* skepticism) over reverence (*ie.* faith), meant to frustrate rather than fulfill notions of literature & propriety, the dialectical antithesis, or devil's advocacy, of anti-art. Presumptuousness countered by *onanism*. The holy goof on stilts *tilting* at the moon. A profanation of stature & authority based on pontifical assumptions of greatness & predicated in conceits of private language & exceptional capability. The pomposities of exclusive authority & centralized ethos inhibit equitable participation in the cultural dynamic expressly because of the mystique & apparent implacability of arcane terminology & concepts, a situation effectively relieved by

emphasizing demystification of language in everything you crow. It's not the language but the people wielding it who have the power, language opening readily to everyone inclined to explore its wonder. And the smallies demonstrate the ease with which the common joe might join in.

POET AS RECORDER, THE EYES & THE EARS OF POST-ERITY TRAINED RESOLUTELY ON THE PAST You must go beyond emotion, unreliable litmus of how you feel as a measure of how things are, to determine the validity (& defensibility) of action. A simple precept that precludes malign conviction. Life is obviously more about endurance than fulfillment, about transmuting experience into understanding with every breath. It's hard work & you can't expect to remain beatific throughout. The inflexible adherence to feeling leaves us locked out of the flux of vantage so critical to sustaining open mind. Its adherents rarely even put out feelers to examine the emancipation, say, of metalinguistic revisions from issue to model. They can't escape conviction because they fail to identify the fiction of parochialism—thesis & antithesis only ever resolved in a synthesis of might. No compunction about the loss of torque their notions suffer dismissing engines of contemplation—like the zen bowl of muddy water—nor remotest interest in the need to establish a theory of emotions in which the turgid effect of hormones might be allowed to silt back to clarity & excite insight more than simple exuberance or rage. Community goes on in mind—the very notion requiring reflection—the resonance of letters representing the nexus of our most sound literary ethos. How neat it is to conduct community in solitude like this, tapping up insights like letters addressed to specific individuals—the identity of the muse revealed on reflection—the prodigy of details dusted up from a tramp through image nation, accumulating a record of creative

activity that conveys the soundest requirements of a resonant ethos, a synchronic concourse scratched up off the page beyond rabble & herd with room for even the most remote reflection—script still our most efficient & effective mode of time & space travel. There's a connection between lettered intercourse & the need to improvise alternatives when bereaved of the means to conduct a more expansive conjugation, the economic expediency of the salvage of alternative community (*ie.* what alternative forms of expression those without means manage to effect *outside* privileged community), comprising the very essence of subculture. The make-do world of private reflection where everyone's word can be heard. Yet a place you grow. The simple plea for peace, steeped in the insular privilege of comfortable intuition, condescended, for instance, to examine the terms & implications of the linguistic invoked. Those who rely on their sense of the world, convinced that what they see & think & feel is right & true, avoid the ultimate obligation of skeptical revolution to question every authority including their senses, the gags of certitude & rectitude defused so effortlessly by reverting all sense to the word. How much they assume that *they* not the language, have something to say, as if writing were more than thinking, expressing an almost pathetic earnestness for recognition as something known as a *writer*. Yet what self could you *not* doubt? The commodified line, producing thing not think, for the most part crafting assault, provoking response, holds the audience essential to its musing, an adolescent instigation of affection inviting little more community than the intimacy of conspiracy. Conspiracy that ultimately conspires nothing more than preferences of style. No philosophy to speak of other than the high anarchic indifference presented by a decidedly benign conception of *laissez-faire*; that is, until you fix on their privilege, suburban intellectuals who reserve the right to do what-

ever they want for as long as they can get away with it after leaving residence at college. Where is *that* voice in their work? No feeling for intellectual integrity, really, the recognition that all language issues expressly from the realm of intellect, sustaining an inventory of positions—& impositions, heavy on the invention—from which cultural intercourse exercises longing for touch & understanding. *It's a game!* A game we invented, not something real. You can use language on yourself to temper expectation, imagining yourself say, in a concentration camp, to offset solitude or inclinations to suicide; or consider a tormentor your mongoloid brother to excuse the excesses of one who more appropriately needs sympathy than censure: our affinity for sound & symbol, turned to mantra, *essential* to sustaining the spell of resonant community for every disenfranchised soul exiled by the word to the outlands of our contingency line. Context, as much as text, there for everyone to manipulate. Art not really any more meaningful than my finger in your eye, or your tongue in my ear.

WHO COULD TOLERATE INDEFENSIBLE THEORIES & partial conduct that offend equality of rights & mobility, or denigrate the miraculous equivalence of breath. Community goes on in mind, I say it again, the precepts & prejudices of the language we settle on to express anything less than gratitude & reverence for breath, infecting the concourse of civilizing ideas with the virus of ultimate discord. And I contend, we owe it to each other, & to the future of the entire planet, to intrude on construct in the persistent examination of motives & conduct that all of us default to, to implore the critical reconsideration of the terms of community & intention we advance that holds the key to restoring the miracle to all breath.

SYMBOL APPROPRIATED or merely repeated, for effect, effects manner, an irresponsible use of the matter at hand,

whereas the responsible approach is to stop being a monkey in a parrot-cage & choose your terms & totems carefully, tools you reduce to accountability through denotation, looking, or making up every meaning (making it by taking it back to origin, comprehending the intention behind the *sound*, especially where the dictionary fails to provide apperceptions of speculative origin). Expression invariably improves when confined to essentials like intention & wonder, beyond mere style. Style *vs* insight: manner *vs* matter: glib (voluble, implying volumes) *vs* informed (*ie.* from reflection, not reading).

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN MANNER & MATTER might profitably be explored in the essential inferiority of verb forms over noun forms in composition. Language is fundamentally a nominative function, our first words being names for things or phenomena, more than descriptions of their actions. Writing constructed on a nominative frame presents more matter to reflect on than writing moving a lesser number of things around. Take for instance, genre writing (mysteries, romances, war & spy stories & even to a degree, sci-fi), the preponderant co-efficient of *narration* being dialogue. Like the confidence man on a street-corner, prefacing every incursion with the discomfiting salutation "*I tell ya...*", this line of admittedly entertaining verbosity generally sells you more bill than goods. It is the *manner* of speech we buy, not really any insights to speak of. You can 'weigh' the gravity of a text by removing from it every verb form & sifting the ruins for the proportions of its vision, the *things* you're expected to reflect on (*cf.* *Nouvelle Roman*), but a narrative devoid of its nouns simply leaves you running about here & there looking for clues to its outcome. I admit this is a trite (& ultimately indefensible) reduction, but it serves to throw the distinction between matter & manner into relief, & provides an albeit unconventional index for

writers to resort to when looking to modulate their vantage. Of course, most writers balk at such gratuity, looking to master the compendium of accredited forms & models, without so much as a thought to a time before such sophistry. Neither Dante nor Aristotle ever read Shakespeare, the antecedents of our insight not nearly so important as our determination to examine the beast from every aspect (however fatuous). It's that wonder, the state of grace of the child, to whom everything is a mystery, & whose hunger for the world opens aperture—open eye, open mind—that we proceed on, *not* propriety. Yet the notion of manner music (to shift Reznikoff's emphasis on muse in a music comportment) is something very few of the current choirboys are prepared to detect in their own earnest swells of rank refrain... the same 'rigorous' skool-primed herd, fattened on the myopia of pros with their atavistic notions of 'good' writing, that sustains the tedious lemming *status quo* of *writing 101*, & completely misses the fatal distinction between their art of exercise & the visionary literature of the outcast exiled beyond cachet & support by their defiance of every convention on which the mass markets its word. They remain oblivious to the kinæsthesia of loser lit, menials dismissed by militant subversion of the *status quo*, to clawing up insights from the shadows, against all odds, to make their mark. The flag they fly emblazoned with the motto of experiment, the lofty ideal they fail miserably to detect in the imperatives of the outsiders they so casually dismiss or at best relegate to the margins of their prosperous ethos of sinecure & monopoly. Not a suspicion of the terror & resentment undermining every syllable of registration of their underground counterpart, just the blithe thunder of an avalanche of certitude sounding up the monotonous measure of lemming detachment with every headlong plunge into the suspended chasm of disbelief.

WITNESS THE ACCESSION OF THE CHATTERING MONKS of deposed authority to the dominant rank of the new dictation, poised to muscle the notion of a progressive intellectual (even æsthetic..) tradition back into the academy for good, despite the imperative sendup in the incongruity of their cites which they claim excepts them from its rule, in dutiful "pata-physical deference. The persistent technicality of their linguistic reflections (& their arsenal of arcane antecedents), besides reasserting the prerogatives of an elite (even in contradiction), tediously concentrates the wonder of language in endless illustration of key tenets of a demonstrable disenfranchisement of author & intent imposed by *theories* of relativity. The emphasis on autonomous text, entirely relative—abject in its authority—the signal reliability of literature, implies rejection of the validity of language as a consensual distraction, which with its sounds & semes, might in fact trigger identical emissions of hormone & insight in all who strive to ride its resonance, for all we know. Language as parasite seen from the other end of the beerglass, might in fact, substantiate the unmistakable expression of a kinæsthetic responsiveness to the sophistications of sound & seme, a familiarity or ingrained facility for discrimination, a potential readily decoded in the constructs & omissions of the text. No intentionality, *equanimity*. The very aspect of transactual seimiology on which we base so much of our impression. Funny that the new school, weaned on Burroughs & Ballard, would so thoroughly dismiss *any* possibility, but it might be that a steady diet of speculation, with character subsumed to plot, insinuated their prejudice against reading (their projections of) the author rather than the event. Seems they argue for complete revocation of the antique precepts of the art, *wonders* explicating the products of the new doctrine, but somewhat *suspect* editing say, a page of prose, or acquiescing to the vagaries of *melopæia* in Tennyson. As if they

mean perhaps, to displace all literature with the martial measure of this radical revision, the new goosestep of heightened erudition. So roiled in their terminology as to be virtually incompetent without it, as if literature were terminal without terms & not much at all foundered in isolation, on mere language. Notice the emphasis on sophistry agitating community to exclusive extremes, their ideological & terminological obsessions depriving children, say, access to their word. Detractors of the advance on authority by the untied tongue, they appear to indict unschooled art on the specious grounds of having diluted or enervated culture, perhaps purposely evading the essential improvement of access to information & the means of positing individual identity, that was effected. Only those sold on the notion of progress could ever assume (Olson's interjection notwithstanding) that revocation of that access might constitute an increase in community benefit, the reflex of specialized terminology (toward obfuscation in the many, clarity in the few) animating the tired conceit of every oligarch defending private language back to the first elite, as our surest means to *progress* & ultimate prosperity. It says, "*trust me*"—entrust culture to the charge of specialists—"literature is essentially a matter beyond your feeble comprehension."

AFFLICTED WITH EMPATHY A voyeur, saturated by the word, as far outside the discipline of poetry as possible, hungrily observing the alien refinements of an amazing comprehension, reduced—as all authentic poets can't fail to affect those they consume in the enzymes of their prodigious wonder—to the entrancement of unimpeded consideration, a fluency more impression than expression, inkling acolytic arousal of the most receptive membrana of insight & revelation. Artists are bridled with empathy, the unfortunate facility for embodying things at a glance & trembling their insignificance (yet in truth,

a facility for detecting the fuse of animation within the slightest particle of perceptible refuse), no vantage secure enough to preserve the inviolability of unadulterated self. They are the vocal principle at large, too lost resounding the pullulations & protestations of bud & bole, in their crowd of images & metaphors, to settle themselves in community as anything more exemplary than auditors. Astonishing scryers of mantic revelation abandoned for the most part by society to the solace of their word. Poetry spanning variability of amplitudes from Blaser to Blazek, that lovely, uncomplicated solace of sound insights that leaves you literally haunted by the word. An outside hand flourished in the dictates of the humblest practice, charity of audition as much enfolding the precept '*writing is reading*' as the holy goof-off of Spicer's practice of outside. What speaks loudest to the divine, in the resonance of speech—each word looked to for origin, the shadow bestowing light, out of transitions—is the echo of meat exceeded by language, a parasite transmitting imperatives outside nature capable of turning us out of our selves for good. No one 'turns out' the way they planned.

EXEMPLARY AUDITORS MILITANTLY OUTSIDE the stampede of performance-paroxysm convulsing culture since the advent of rock, the underground poets sustain a paradigm exemplifying restraint from the *obsession* for recognition. It's important to have someone out there providing counterpoint to this compulsion to be heard & held, the herd deaf from the thunder of its lemming desperation to any but the most visual display.

BIZARRE RETAIL of the tedious united-front rationalization of artgang ineffectuality (at least regarding the pipe-dream of artists generally valued in a capital society), when you

consider that most literary art is created in isolation, the quintessential condition for the writer, the very detachment he or she argues, *fragments* the concert of ideal community impact. The charade of the unified lobby for better treatment for artists in this country, succeeded as much as it could through the 60s & 70s, in landing us here, essentially more bereft—given the encroaching abandonment of subsidies, which only really supported the activities of those who pushed for them, not the community at large—yet many poets apparently still haven't recognized that the alternative of going underground & sustaining remote beacons in a sea of indifference, as well as possible, just may have been the effective response all along. The smallpress preserving the word beyond the ulterior imperatives of commerce & commodity as the poet has for millennia: under siege underground. Doing the work to sustain resonant community (*ie.* thoughtful, responsible, free), *in exile*, turning the wheels of thought, the drums of industry & the pockets of resistance to the perpetual infection of independent letters. As Powys pointed out about the Cymri, "we have always, secretly & in the depths of our spirits, been among ourselves," despite their history of continuous subjugation by every ambitious foreign incursion into Wales, obstinate in their accommodation as victims, to preserving their "language whose syntax & whose syntax only is the Merlin-like *esplumeoir* of our soul... never has any victim of warlike invasion found a subtler or more satisfying way of taking such conquests...." This is the resonance of the hand-forged smallpress effect at market, that haunting, industrious *esplumeoir* that sings its counterpoint to the monotonous insensitivity of essentially gluttonous times. It is irrational to expect the desecraters & deserters of the word to subsidize such resistance, our subversion of their merciless conformity from without the elevator dynamic of their rectilinear society, something anyone instilled with true conscience

of the word must sustain *without* regard to welfare. Victor's perhaps reactionary emphasis on the TORONTO SMALL PRESS GROUP as a means to smallie survival sustains the animation of an economic utility that just may be superfluous to the *essentials* of the movement, & this sort of rationalization of purpose, at least where it displaces actual *necessities*, in my view, inevitably obscures, & ultimately discourages, truly *alternative* community.

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